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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KMDR](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#) [KUWAIT](#) [IRAQ](#) [RELATIONS](#)  
SUBJECT: KUWAITIS SKEPTICAL ABOUT PRESIDENT'S NEW IRAQ  
STRATEGY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Although the Kuwaiti government welcomed the President's new Iraq strategy, the Kuwaiti public was more skeptical. While praising the strategy's ultimate goal of stabilizing Iraq, Kuwaitis expressed doubt that a temporary increase in the number of troops would achieve this objective. Some editorialists also took the opportunity to criticize the Administration for what they perceive as the failure of other U.S. policies in the region, most notably with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Quoting an unnamed government source, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported January 11 that Kuwait "followed with interest" the President's speech outlining his new strategy on Iraq. "Kuwait hopes this plan will be a constructive step to tackle the deteriorating security situation, and contribute to achieving security and stability...within a free, secured and united Iraq," KUNA reported. Khaled Al-Jarallah, the Undersecretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told the Ambassador the GOK believed it was "a great plan" and hoped it would succeed.

¶3. (SBU) Among the Kuwaiti public, however, the President's new Iraq strategy was greeted with more skepticism. While supporting the goal of stabilizing Iraq, Kuwaitis questioned whether the strategy would be more effective than previous approaches in achieving that objective. Dr. Abdullah Sahar, a Shi'a political science professor at Kuwait University, told Poloff January 14 that he was pleased that the new strategy showed that the U.S. had learned the lesson that control of Baghdad was essential to controlling the rest of Iraq. However, he urged U.S. to make decisions based on military, not political considerations. Sahar argued that providing jobs and essential services to Iraqis was more important than cracking down on the militias and would ultimately lead to a political solution. He also advised the U.S. to "keep your eye on the ball (i.e. Iraq)," rather than getting distracted by other regional problems. In a separate January 14 conversation, former Shi'a Minister of Information Dr. Saad bin Teflah told Poloff he was not optimistic that the President's new strategy would succeed. He argued that the U.S. must do two things to stabilize the situation in Iraq: first, listen to its "old friends" in the Arab world; and second, clearly elaborate its policy on Iran, which strongly affected regional perceptions of events in Iraq.

¶4. (SBU) Editorialists generally echoed these views. Liberal columnist Dr. Ayed Al-Manna wrote in Al-Watan (local Arabic daily) January 13, "The new strategy of (President Bush) may constitute a workable and basic blueprint to control the state of turmoil currently prevalent in Iraq, but this measure will not be better than the earlier plans since they have not been translated into deeds on the ground." He went on to advise the U.S. to "start another war (against insurgents in Iraq) to provide security and stability for all Iraqis." Liberal lawyer and columnist Mohammed Al-Saleh

echoed this view, saying "I don't think this new strategy...will help solve the disputes and wars in the Middle East." He argued that America's sophisticated weaponry was useless against suicide bombers and IEDs. Al-Saleh characterized the conflict in Iraq as a struggle between Iran, Syria, and the Iraqi Ba'ath Party on one hand and the U.S. and the Iraqi government on the other, and concluded by emphasizing that "containing tensions in the Middle East rests on containing their causes."

15. (SBU) Some were more critical and used the opportunity to criticize other U.S. policies in the region. In a January 13 editorial in Al-Qabas (local Arabic daily), former Shi'a Member of Parliament Dr. Abdul Mohsen Jamal accused President Bush of "turning a deaf ear" to the many voices calling for a different approach and only listening "to the Republican hawks who are known to sympathize with the Zionists." Jamal, who is often critical of the U.S. and supportive of Iran in his writings, added that the President was only looking to blame the Iraqi government and regional states for U.S. failures in Iraq. He concluded by advising the GCC 2 against supporting "a new war to be waged by the U.S. administration."

16. (SBU) Another pro-Iran, anti-American Shi'a columnist, Dr. Sami Khalifa claimed the United States' "failure to dominate (Iraq's) national resources" had caused the President to "lose his balance." President Bush "is currently thinking of drowning the whole region in a state of sedition among various sects and doctrines," he claimed. In a separate January 13 editorial, Salafi Islamist columnist Ahmed Al-Kaus took a slightly more neutral tone, but warned that the U.S. was seeking "to involve our countries once again in a losing war of which we will be the first victims."

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He identified the "hateful sectarianism against the Sunnis (in Iraq) at the hands of the death militias" as the primary problem facing that country.

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LeBaron